

NOTES ON SOORAH AL-KAHF

Introduction

- Kahf means ‘cave’ in verse 9 (Ashaabul Kahf)
- Earlier times titled “Soorah ashaab al kahf”

Place of Revelation

- Subject-matter and style is in Makkah. Some scholars consider verses 1-8, 28 and 107-110 in Madeenah.
- Inauthentic narration from Ibn Kathir quoting Tabari about three Quraish men asking the Jews about Prophet Muhammad. The three questions were 1) the youth who disappeared in earlier times 2) traveler to from East to West 3) Concerning the Soul. Ibn Is'haaq's teacher was unknown.

The Merits of the Soorah

- **Descent of Tranquility** – Hadeeth of Al Baraa about a man reciting Soorah al kahf when an animal in his house became agitated and there was cloud hovering over him. The prophet instructed him to continue his recitation. Sahih Muslim.
- **Protection from Dajjaal** – First ten verses (Sahih Muslim) or last ten verses (Sahih Muslim) from Soorah al Kahf.
- **A Source of light** – illumination by its light from one Friday to the next (Mustadrak – Saheeh al Jaami') and as a light on the Day of Resurrection (Mustadrak – Saheeh at Targheeb).
- **Forgiveness** – “...he would be forgiven for his sins between the two Fridays” a mawqoof narration from Ibn Umar according to Ibn Kathir. [The meaning is correct according to hadeeth].

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VERSE 1. PRAISE BE TO ALLAH, WHO REVEALED TO HIS SERVANT THE SCRIPTURE IN WHICH HE DID NOT ALLOW ANY DEVIATION.

- Do not praise yourselves (53:32). Allah is the source of all goodness and blessings. Self praise by Allah is not a vice but a virtue and right.
- Alhamd means “Describing the one praised with perfection as an expression of love and glorification”. Hamd is more general praising for one’s character and thanks for what he has done. Shukr is only thanking for what one has done and not for characteristics. (Ibn Kathir).
- Allah can be called God because al-Ilaah is one of His attributes.

- **Virtues of Alhamdulillah**
 - **Best Supplication** – Hadeeth of Jabir ibn Abdillah “The best way to remember Allah is Laa ilaha illallah and the best supplication is alhamdulillah. (Saheeh Sunan Ibn Maajah).
 - **Giving thanks for Blessings** - giving thanks for blessing is itself a cause for increased blessings. [14:7]
- **The Occasions for alHamdulillah**
 - On Awakening from Sleep [Alhamdulillah alladhee ahyana ba'da ma amaatana wa ilayhin-nushoor] [All praise is due to Allah who brought us to life after causing us to die and to him belongs the resurrection.] (Sahih Al Bukhari)
 - On Completion of Meals
 - On Seeing Suffering
- **“Who revealed to His Servant”**
 - Prophet Muhammad is described as ‘His Servant’ in three context” 1) When describing the revelation of the Qur'an 2) When speaking in his defence 3) On the occasion of his ascension. Though all creatures are His servants, because he was the greatest servant of Allah amongst human beings. In the most honorable positions of the Prophet, Allah described him as a servant. Thus, the most blessed description of a human being is that of a “Servant of Allah”.
- **“The Scripture”**
 - Primarily here the Qur'an. It is the greatest blessing which He has granted the people of the earth – takes them out of darkness into light.
- **“He did not allow any deviation”**
 - Two characteristics of perfection from all sides
 - Negating from it any deviation (its information is free from lies, and its commands or prohibitions free from oppression or frivolity).
 - Affirming uprightness (it only informs about and commands the most important issues that fill the hearts with understanding, faith and reason).
 - **See 4:82**
 - Compared to the Old Testament where the prophets of God are described in the most corrupt terms. Prophet Abraham as drunkard; Prophet Lot committing incest with his daughters; Prophet David committing adultery; and Prophet Solomon worshipping idols in his old age.
 - Hindu Scriptures – god incarnate [avatar] Krishna hiding clothes of women swimming naked in lakes (Govindpuran).

VERSE 2. [HE MADE IT] STRAIGHT TO WARN OF A TERRIBLE PUNISHMENT COMING FROM HIM, AND TO GIVE GLAD TIDINGS OF A GOOD REWARD TO THE BELIEVERS WHO DO RIGHTEOUS DEEDS.

- "[HE made it} straight". Shawkani: 1) refers to its straightforwardness 2) custodian and guardian for the previous divine revealed scriptures.
- Belief alone is not sufficient; righteous actions should accompany it.
- Two conditions for an act to be righteous:
 - Sincerity to Allah: intending to have the pleasure of Allah and the Hereafter.
 - Obedience to Allah: The deed must not be outside Allah's Shareah.
- "A good reward" the pleasure of Allah and entrance to paradise containing what no eye has ever seen, nor ear ever heard, not has it crossed the mind of any human being.

VERSE 3. THEY WILL REMAIN THERE FOREVER.

- Both paradise and hell already exists now and they are both eternal. (4:168-9) (33:64-5) (43:74-5)
- The Heaven is already created."...prepared for the God fearing". (3:133). Numerous hadeeth supports this. "Indeed I saw paradise and I had a bunch of fruit from it. If I had brought it, you would have eaten [from it] as long as the world existed...." (**Al Bukhari**)
- **Location of Paradise:** It is in the highest level of *'Illiyoon* (83:18)
- **Hell** is in the lowest of the lows (83:7).
- **Harun Yahya's deviant teachings:**
 - "...it will be understood with what kind of order Allah created the entire universe from out of nothing, so much so that, with this secret, **the question of "when" and "where?" become meaningless** because there are no time and space left. When spacelessness is grasped, it will be understood that hell, heaven and earth are all actually **the same place.**" (Allah is known through reason (pp. 202-3).
- **Those who say that Hell is not eternal**
 - Jahmites
 - Imam of the pantheists, Ibn 'Arabee at Taa'ee
 - Aboo Haazil al 'Allaaf (a leading Mu'tazilah scholar)
 - Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al Qayyim
- Evidence of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al Qayyim
 - Narrated Abdullah ibn 'Amar al Aas that he said: "There will come a time when a wind will blow through the gates of Hell, and there will be nobody in it. This is a *marfoo'* narration."
 - "**And those who are blessed, they will be in Paradise abiding there for as long as the heavens and earth endure, except as your Lord wills, a gift without end.**" (11:108)
 - It is not permissible to malign or condemn these two scholars because of this error of *jtihaad*.
 - Another narration from Ibn Taimiyyah in Majmoo' Fatawa
 - "The Salaf and Imaams of this Ummah and Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah agreed that there exist created entities that will never come to an end at all, like Paradise, Hell etc."

- This indicates that Ibn Taimiyyah has two opinions. Unless one can establish his final verdict it is incorrect to assert that he held that Hell would end without qualifying it.

VERSE 4. AND WARN THOSE WHO SAY THAT, ALLAH HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO A SON.

- This acted as an explanation from what was left unspecified in the previous verse – Ibn Uthaimeen.
- See (9:30) “**The Jews call ‘Uzayr a son of Allah, and the Christian call Christ the son of Allah...”**
- Encyclopedia Judaica Jerusalem states that Uszayr called the Father of Judaism by the Jews was considered ‘son of God’ by the Jews of Yemen.

VERSE 5. THEY HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE ABOUT IT, NOR DO THEIR FATHERS. THE WORD COMING OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS IS VERY GRAVE. WHAT THEY ARE SAYING IS NOTHING BUT LIE.

- The belief that Jesus is a son of God only became the dominant teaching of Christianity in the 4th century when it was adopted at the council of Nicea in 325 AD along with the other belief that Christ has same nature as God. Arius (250-336) the bishop of Alexandria of Egypt opposed to sign this creed. Before that there are numerous Christians who had diverse views on Christ, each with their own scripture to anchor their views.
- Other prophets were called the Son of God
 - Israel (Jacob) in Exodus 4:22-24
 - Solomon in 2nd Samuel 8:13-14
 - David in Psalm 89:26-27. As the only begotten son in Psalms 2:7.
 - Angels are sons of God in the Book of Job 1:6
- In New Testament
 - Adam the son of God in Luke 3:38
 - Nowhere in the Gospels Jesus actually called himself “Son of God”. Jesus rebuke those who called him the Son of God in Luke 4:41.
- **The Hebrew Perspective**
 - The Hebrews were strict Monotheists and in their expression Son of God (usage in the Old Testament) metaphorically means “Servant of God” one who is a close and faithful servant of God as a son to his father.
 - **Example:** *Blessed are the peace-makers; they will be called sons of God.* (Matthew 5:9)
- **The Roman Perspective**
 - Romans and Greeks believe in a literal meaning of Son of God as a god incarnate or someone born of a physical union between male and female gods.
 - **Example:** In Acts 14:11-13 Barnabas called the Roman god Zeus and Paul was called the Roman god Hermes.

- Allah has refuted all these claims in the last scripture sent to mankind (72:3) (19:92-3) (39:4)
- **THE WORD COMING OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS IS VERY GRAVE.**
 - **The heavens are almost torn apart, the earth split in two and the mountain crumble, that they claim the Most Gracious had a son.** (1n9:90-1)
 - Allah having a son means that He is deficient and others share in His Lordship, His Dominion and His Divinity. It is also lying about Him. (6:21).

VERSE 6. PERHAPS YOU WILL DESTROY YOURSELF IN GRIEF FOLLOWING AFTER THEM BECAUSE THEY DID NOT BELIEVE IN THIS SPEECH.

- The Prophet was very keen that the creation would be guided, would be very happy if they were guided and sad when the disbelievers were not because of his compassion and deep sympathy and pity for them.
- If Allah knew that there was any good in them, He would have guided them, but He knows that they are only suitable for the Hellfire.
- Thus busying oneself with grief and sorrow over them is of no benefit.
- **"You cannot guide whom you love. But Allah guides whom He wills"** (28:56) (88:21-22) (13:40)
- There are two types of person who becomes sad when people do not accept the truth.
 - One type who is sad because he is not accepted – blameworthy because this is calling to ones self.
 - Another type who is sad because the truth is not accepted – praiseworthy because this is calling to Allah.

VERSE 7. INDEED I HAVE MADE WHAT IS ON THE EARTH ITS BEAUTIFICATION TO TEST WHICH OF THEM DOES THE BEST DEEDS.

- This world is a temporary home adorned with transient beauty, a place of trial and not a permanent settlement.
- *"Indeed this life is sweet and green (i.e. plants that die) and Allah has put you in-charge of in in succeeding generations and He observes what you are doing. So fear this world and fear women because the beginning of trials of the Israelites was women."* (Sahih Muslim)
- The quality of the deed not the quantity is more important as implied by the word "**Best Deeds**" not the 'most deeds'.
- Wealth and Children are part of adornment in this life (18:46) (63:9) (64:14). Enmity not from hatred and conflict but love and care prevent parents from religious duties [Ibn Taimiyah].

- Everything in this world is a test; denying this is futile and absurd. Allah is above and beyond meaningless actions; His perfection invalidates His creation without purpose; without giving them directions; without commanding them to do good and forbidding them from evil. Whoever denies this has denied Allah's divinity and lordship. Whoever denies the Day of Resurrection is itself denial of the Lord's existence. [Ibn Taimiyyah].
- Allah does not test us to know who will pass instead it serves to confirm His Justice and Mercy on the Day of Judgment; that those who goes to Hell deserve it and those who go to Paradise got there by God's grace. [Shawkani].
- **Purpose of Test Hell**
 - **Spiritual Growth.** Gold is purified from ore by fire. Generosity is gained if one have a degree of sustenance that others (16:71)
 - **Purification.** If they are patient with trials.
 - **Reminders.** When people deviate, they seldom listen to the advice of those around them. But when calamity strikes, it jolts those who still have some faith recognizing their error. (32:21)
 - **"Corruption has appear on the land and in the sea because of what man's hands have earned in order that (Allah) may make them taste a part of what they have done, and in order that they may return** (to the right path). (30:41).
 - **To expose Hypocrites** (24:63) People converting to Islam for wrong reasons, and after finding more difficulties in their lives that prior to their conversion they revert to their former beliefs.
 - **Punishment.** (24:63) Stories of past nations who rejected divine guidance (Aad, Thamood, Fir'aun etc). Punishment afflicts everyone one, not only the sinners. (8:25).

VERSE 8. INDEED I WILL MAKE ALL THAT IS ON IT LIKE DRY BARE SOIL.

- Don't look only at the exterior of this world and be fooled by its adornments and its beauty.
- Take this world as a place of crossing not a place of delight, a place for travel not a place for residence. Spend your utmost effort to know your Lord, to obey His commands, and perfect your deeds. [As-Sa'aadi].

VERSE 9. AND DO YOU THINK THAT THE COMPANIONS OF THE CAVE AND THE INSCRIPTIONS WERE WONDERS AMONG MY SIGNS?

- The story of the people of the cave is not really something astonishing relative to the Power and Ability of Allah. The creation of the heavens and the earth, the alternation of night and day and the subjugation of the sun, moon and heavenly bodies are more amazing. Allah is capable of doing far more amazing than the incident of the people of the Cave. [Ibn Kathir] (40:57), (79:27).
- Humankind is quite insignificant in relationship to the remainder of the creation. Abundance of wealth and technological discoveries often leads them to arrogance and pride.

- The Story of Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in circulation amongst the Christians of this time. In 250 CE the Roman Emperor Decius persecutes Christians which lead seven (or eight in some versions) to be concealed in a cave near Ephesus. They were protected from pagan sacrifices and fell into a miraculous sleep. The cave was reopened during the reign of Eastern Roman Emperor Theodosius II (408 – 450). [Encyclopedia Britannica].

VERSE 10. WHEN THE YOUNG MEN FLED FOR REFUGE TO THE CAVE, THEY SAID: "OUR LORD! GRANT US YOUR MERCY AND ARRANGE OUR AFFAIRS FOR US IN THE RIGHT WAY!"

- Concerning fleeing for the sake of one's religion and the abandonment of family, children, relatives, friends, land and wealth out of fear of trials. The Prophet made ***Hijrah*** and so did his Companions. Living in isolation and the permissibility of fleeing from tyrants in Sunnah of the Prophets and the saintly.
- Depends on a person's ability: Seclusion in caves or mountains or seclusion in one's home (some companions secluded themselves in their homes after the assassination of Caliph's Uthman and did not leave except to their graves).
- The power of supplication when in distress. "**Our Lord! Grant us your mercy...**" The Prophet s.a.w. used to hasten to prayers whenever any matter disturbed him. (Sunan Abu Dawood).
- After doing the best one can for himself, he should put his trust in Allah.
- **YOUTH.**
 - ⊕ Those who accepted Islam from outside of the Prophet's family were relative youths – none is older than him.
 - ⊕ Phenomena in which young people tend to be the ones most receptive to Islam. Vast majority of 3000 Americans who converted to Islam were in their early twenties during the first Gulf War.
- The Importance of Faith in Youth. A youth who grows up worshipping Allah is one of those who will be shaded by Allah's shade in the Day of Resurrection. [Refer to the hadeeth of who will be shaded in the Day of Resurrection]. The connection of having a Just Ruler and religious youth is that the Just Ruler will promote Islamic education system, social system and various elements in the society so that it will be relatively easy for a young person to grow up worshipping Allah.
- Raising Righteous Children:
 - ⊕ Step One: Choose Righteous Spouse
 - ⊕ Step Two: Make Supplications
 - ⊕ Step Three: Observe the 'Aqeedah
 - ⊕ Step Four: Create an Islamic Environment
 - ⊕ Step Five: Teach the Religion Early
 - ⊕ Step Six: Teach by Example
 - ⊕ Step Seven: Marry them to righteous spouses

VERSE 11. THEN I DREW A VEIL OVER THEIR EARS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS.

- Drawing a veil over the ears is a metaphor for deep sleep which prevents sounds from reaching the ears. [Shawkani] The Prophet also used the ear metaphor to describe the corruption of oversleeping "Satan urinated in his ear". [al Qurtubi].
- The actual number of years is mentioned in verse 24. "**So they stayed in the cave for three hundred years and nine more**".

VERSE 12. THEN I ROUSED THEM IN ORDER TO TEST [TO KNOW] WHICH OF THE TWO PARTIES WAS BEST IN CALCULATING THE LENGTH OF TIME THAT THEY PASSED.

- "**Then I roused (resurrected) them...**" awakening from sleep is referred as resurrection because sleep is a form of death. (6:60) (39:42). [Ibn Uthaimeen].
- "**In order to know...**" the phrase has two meanings:
 1. The knowledge of what will be is not the same as knowledge of what was. Allah's knowledge of something before its occurrence is knowledge that it will occur, but after its occurrence, it is knowledge that it occurred.
 2. The knowledge on the basis of which there is a reward of what was intended. (47:31). Allah knows the future: who will do good deeds but He will only reward the doer once the act is performed. Neither recompense nor reward is given based on Allah's knowledge unless it occurs. [Ibn Uthaimeen]
- However, there is no difference between what He knows will occur and what He knows has occurred as far as certainty is concerned. [Ibn Uthaimeen].
- Allah has protected the Youths as a test for the people and for the youth themselves. Allah answered their prayers by a miracle. Allah is the one who can do the unexpected. We have to believe that even though the situation is hopeless. "**Whoever fears Allah, He will make for him way out and provide for him from where he did not expect it. And whoever trusts in Allah, He will be sufficient for him**". (At Talaaq 65:2-3).

13. I WILL RELATE THEIR TRUE STORY TO YOU. THEY WERE YOUTHS WHO BELIEVED IN THEIR LORD AND I INCREASED THEIR LEVEL OF GUIDANCE.

- According to the Arabic idiom, whenever a single person refers to himself using a plural form, it indicates that he is great. Nothing is greater than Allah... Therefore the intent of every plural pronoun referring to Allah is praise. It's equivalent in English language is the "royal" we or "majestic" we.
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